

Message Text

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21

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

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CINCUSAREUR//AEAGD-T

USCINCEUR

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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

COMSCELM BREMERHAVEN

CINCUSAFE

CINCUSNAVEUR

CDR MTMC WASHDC

CDR COMSC WASHDC

CDR 4TH TRANS BDE OBERURSEL GE

CDR USATTGE RODM NETHERLANDS

COMSCLANT

DIA WASHDC

MSCO ROTTERDAM NETHERLANDS

HQ BENELUX TERMINAL/CO/ROTTERDAM

AMCONSUL ANTWERP

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 04186

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MMOL, MARR, MASS, BE, US

SUBJECT: INVESTIGATION OF GHENT AS MUNITIONS HANDLING PORT

REF: (A) BRUSSELS 03398 (DTG 021611Z APR 76, (B) BRUSSELS
2062 (DTG 151801Z MAR 76 (NOTAL), (C) CMAAG NETHERLANDS

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(DTG 051535Z MAR 76) (NOTAL), D. TELECON CAPT HAMER, MAAG

BELLUX AND COL HUDSON MAAG NETHERLANDS OF 26 APR 76

SUMMARY: TWO RECENT FOLLOW ON MEETINGS BETWEEN U.S. AND BELGIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE BEEN HELD REGARDING THE VIABILITY OF THE PORT OF GHENT FOR U.S. MUNITIONS HANDLING TRAFFIC. THE DUTCH HAVE SURFACED AN 120 NET EXPLOSIVE TON LIMITATION OF MASS DETONATING EXPLOSIVES PER VESSEL TRANSITTING DUTCH INLAND WATERWAYS. UNLESS NEGOTIATED OR WAIVED, THIS LIMITATION WOULD EFFECTIVELY PRECLUDE U.S. UTILIZATION GHENT AS A PRIMARY PORT FOR US/NATO AMMO SHIPMENTS. ADDITIONALLY, BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS INFORMALLY INFORMED US THAT ALL ITS EFFORTS TO MODIFY OR RESCIND POSITION TAKEN BY ZEEBRUGGE PORT AUTHORITIES HAVE COME TO NAUGHT. END SUMMARY.

1. ON 15 APRIL REPS FROM AMEMB BRUSSELS, USAREUR, USCINCEUR, USATTGE ROTTERDAM, FOURTH TRANS BRIGADE, AND MSC ROTTERDAM MET WITH PORT OF GHENT COMMANDANT DE WILDE IN FOLLOW UP DISCUSSIONS AS PROPOSED BY REF A TO FURTHER EXAMINE THE PORT OF GHENT FOR U.S. MUNITIONS HANDLING TRAFFIC. DISCUSSIONS CENTERED ON ALL ASPECTS OF SAFETY REGARDING AMMO HANDLING WITH U.S. REPS ALSO CONDUCTING A PRELIMINARY SAFETY CERTIFICATION INSPECTION OF PORT. CINCUSAREUR CURRENTLY PREPARING SAFETY EVALUATION BASED ON THAT INSPECTION AND SUPPLEMENTARY DATA BEING PROVIDED BY PORT COMMANDANT.

2. PRIMARY QUESTION LEFT UNANSWERED AT 15 APR MEETING WAS WHETHER ANY LIMITATION ON AMMO NET EXPLOSIVE TONNAGE (NET) OF MASS DETONATING EXPLOSIVE WOULD BE IMPOSED BY EITHER GHENT AUTHORITIES FOR PORT OF GHENT OR BY DUTCH AUTHORITIES FOR TRANSIT THROUGH DUTCH WATERS EN ROUTE TO GHENT. EVEN THOUGH DE WILDE HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT INTERNATIONAL NATURE OF TERNEUZEN-GHENT CANAL WOULD PRECLUDE ANY PROBLEMS WITH MUNITIONS SHIP PASSAGE TO GHENT, HE HOSTED 22 APRIL DISCUSSIONS AND VISIT TO GHENT FOR BOTH DUTCH MOD EXPERT THIS SUBJECT AND HIS COUNTERPART FROM BELGIAN MOD.

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3. RESULTS OF THAT 22 APRIL MEETING PRESENTED TO AMEMB BRUSSELS REPS BY DE WILDE ON 23 APR. HE REPORTED THAT DUTCH REP MAJOR LUPKER CITED TWO ITEMS IN DUTCH AMMO REGS RELEVANT TO MUNITIONS PASSAGE. FIRST, A REQUIREMENT THAT SEAGOING AMMO TRANSPORT SHIPS BE UNDER CONTROL OF A MILITARY ESCORT GUARD. FOR BRITISH AMMO SHIPS NOW UTILIZING GHENT, THIS ESCORT NOW CARRIED ON POLICE CRAFT THAT PROCEEDS IN COMPANY WITH AMMO SHIP FROM

TERNEUZEN TO BELGIAN BORGER. LUPKER STATED DUTCH AUTHORITIES CURRENTLY CONSIDERING ELIMINATION SUCH ESCORT DUE SMALL AMOUNT AMMO NET IN BRITISH SHIPS. SECONDLY AND MOST IMPORTANT, LUPKER CITED LIMIT OF 120 NET OF MASS DETONATING EXPLOSIVE, CLASS 5 AND 6, THAT COULD BE "HANDLED" ON ONE VESSEL IN DUTCH INLAND WATERWAYS. THIS IS THE SAME LIMITATION CITED BY DUTCH AUTHORITIES (REF C) FOR THE PORT OF TERNEUZEN EVEN THOUGH IN THE CASE OF GHENT, THE MUNITIONS WOULD ONLY BE TRANSITTING THROUGH RATHER THAN BEING HANDLED IN DUTCH TERRITORY.

4. IN VIEW OF THIS TECHNICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRANSIT-ING AND HANDLING OF AMMUNITIONS, REF D TELECON AND A SUBSEQUENT INFORMAL QUERY OF DUTCH MOD AUTHORITIES IN THE HAGUE BY MAAG NETHERLANDS ESTABLISHED THAT DUTCH VIEW BOTH QUESTIONS IN THE SAME LIGHT. UNLESS A WAIVER OF THE 120 TON LIMITATION IS NEGOTIATED, IT REMAINS VALID FOR SHIPS IN DUTCH WATERS IN SPITE OF THE INTERNATIONAL NATURE OF THE TERNEUZEN-GHENT CANAL.

5. EVEN THOUGH THE GHENT AUTHORITIES, ACCORDING TO DE WILDE, HAVE NO INTENTION AS CONTROLLING AGENT OF THE PORT OF GHENT OF IMPOSING SUCH A LIMITATION, THE DUTCH REGULATION COULD ELIMINATE GHENT FROM CONSIDERATION. THIS IS BASED ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT NORMAL CLASS 5 AND 6 LOADS OF THE AMERICAN RANGER ARE FAR IN EXCESS OF THE 120 TON LIMITATION. IT WOULD THUS APPEAR THAT THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP IN SUBJECT INVESTIGATION IS AN APPROACH TO THE DUTCH AUTHORITIES TO DETERMINE WHETHER THIS LIMITATION CAN BE NEGOTIATED OR WAIVED.

6. IN SEPARATE DEVELOPMENTS, BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY
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HAS INFORMED US UNOFFICIALLY THAT (A) RUYS AND COMPANY (COPPETIERS) FEB 17 LETTER (REF B NOTAL), MAKING VARIOUS SUGGESTIONS ON HOW ZEEBRUGGE RESTRICTIONS MIGHT BE OVERCOME, HAS BEEN FULLY EXPLORED AND NOT RPT NOT FOUND FEASIBLE. (B) FOREIGN MINISTRY NOW BELIEVES AFTER SEVERAL FURTHER SESSIONS WITH ZEEBRUGGE PORT AUTHORITIES THAT IT WILL NOT RPT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO GET THEM TO RESCIND OR MODIFY THEIR POSITION. FOREIGN MINISTRY NOW DISPOSED TO AWAIT FURTHER INDICATION OF HOW SERIOUS EFFECTIVE LOSS OF USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR AMMO SHIPMENTS IS. THEY ARE AWARE IN GENERAL TERMS THAT U.S. AUTHORITIES ARE STUDYING ALTERNATIVES AND ARE NOT RPT NOT APT TO TAKE FURTHER ACTION UNTIL THEY LEARN THE RESULTS OF THOSE STUDIES. FIRESTONE

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